

Snow-White

and other tales of Aarne-Thompson-Uther type 709

translated and/or edited by



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Little Snow-White

Germany, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

Once upon a time in mid winter, when the snowflakes were falling like feathers from heaven, a beautiful queen sat sewing at her window, which had a frame of black ebony wood. As she sewed, she looked up at the snow and pricked her finger with her needle. Three drops of blood fell into the snow. The red on the white looked so beautiful, that she thought, "If only I had a child as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as this frame."

Soon afterward she had a little daughter that was as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as ebony wood, and therefore they called her Little Snow-White.

Now the queen was the most beautiful woman in all the land, and very proud of her beauty. She had a mirror, which she stood in front of every morning, and asked:

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Who in this land is fairest of all?

And the mirror always said:

You, my queen, are fairest of all.

And then she knew for certain that no one in the world was more beautiful than she.

Now Snow-White grew up, and when she was seven years old, she was so beautiful, that she surpassed even the queen herself. Now when the queen asked her mirror:

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Who in this land is fairest of all?

The mirror said:

You, my queen, are fair; it is true.
But Little Snow-White is still
A thousand times fairer than you.

When the queen heard the mirror say this, she became pale with envy, and from that hour on, she hated Snow-White. Whenever she looked at her, she thought that Snow-White was to blame that she was no longer the most beautiful woman in the world. This turned her heart around. Her jealousy gave her no peace. Finally she summoned a huntsman and said to him, "Take Snow-White out into the woods to a remote spot, and stab her to death. As proof that she is dead bring her lungs and her liver back to me. I shall cook them with salt and eat them."

The huntsman took Snow-White into the woods. When he took out his hunting knife to stab her, she began to cry, and begged fervently that he might spare her life, promising to run away into the woods and never return. The huntsman took pity on her because she was so beautiful, and he thought, "The wild animals will soon devour her anyway. I'm glad that I don't have to kill her." Just then a young boar came running by. He killed it, cut out its lungs and liver, and took them back to the queen as proof of Snow-White's death. She cooked them with salt and ate them, supposing that she had eaten Snow-White's lungs and liver.

Snow-White was now all alone in the great forest. She was terribly afraid, and began to run. She ran over sharp stones and through thorns the entire day. Finally, just as the sun was about to set, she came to a little house. The house belonged to seven dwarfs. They were working in a mine, and not at home. Snow-White went inside and found everything to be small, but neat and orderly. There was a little table with seven little plates, seven little spoons, seven little knives and forks, seven little mugs, and against the wall there were seven little beds, all freshly made.

Snow-White was hungry and thirsty, so she ate a few vegetables and a little bread from each little plate, and from each little glass she drank a drop of wine. Because she was so tired, she wanted to lie down and go to sleep. She tried each of the seven little beds, one after the other, but none felt right until she came to the seventh one, and she lay down in it and fell asleep.

When night came, the seven dwarfs returned home from the work. They lit their seven little candles, and saw that someone had been in their house.

The first one said, "Who has been sitting in my chair?"

The second one, "Who has been eating from my plate?"

The third one, "Who has been eating my bread?"

The fourth one, "Who has been eating my vegetables?"

The fifth one, "Who has been sticking with my fork?"

The sixth one, "Who has been cutting with my knife?"

The seventh one, "Who has been drinking from my mug?"

Then the first one said, "Who stepped on my bed?"

The second one, "And someone has been lying in my bed."

And so forth until the seventh one, and when he looked at his bed, he found Snow-White lying there, fast asleep. The seven dwarfs all came running, and they cried out with amazement. They fetched their seven candles and looked at Snow-White. "Good heaven! Good heaven!" they cried. "She is so beautiful!" They liked her very much. They did not wake her up, but let her lie there in the bed. The seventh dwarf had to sleep with his companions, one hour with each one, and then the night was done.

When Snow-White woke up, they asked her who she was and how she had found her way to their house. She told them how her mother had tried to kill her, how the huntsman had spared her life, how she had run the entire day, finally coming to their house. The dwarfs pitied her and said, "If you will keep house for us, and cook, sew, make beds, wash, and knit, and keep everything clean and orderly, then you can stay here, and you'll have everything that you want. We come home in the evening, and supper must be ready by then, but we spend the days digging for gold in the mine. You will be alone then. Watch out for the queen, and do not let anyone in."

The queen thought that she was again the most beautiful woman in the land, and the next morning she stepped before the mirror and asked:

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Who in this land is fairest of all?

The mirror answered once again:

You, my queen, are fair; it is true.
But Little Snow-White beyond the seven mountains
Is a thousand times fairer than you.

It startled the queen to hear this, and she knew that she had been deceived, that the huntsman had not killed Snow-White. Because only the seven dwarfs lived in the seven mountains, she knew at once that they must have rescued her. She began to plan immediately how she might kill her, because she would have no peace until the mirror once again said that she was the most beautiful woman in the land. At last she thought of something to do. She disguised herself as an old peddler woman and colored her face, so that no one would recognize her, and went to the dwarf's house. Knocking on the door she called out, "Open up. Open up. I'm the old peddler woman with good wares for sale."

Snow-White peered out the window, "What do you have?"

"Bodice laces, dear child," said the old woman, and held one up. It was braided from yellow, red, and blue silk. "Would you like this one?"

"Oh, yes," said Snow-White, thinking, "I can let the old woman come in. She means well." She unbolted the door and bargained for the bodice laces.

"You are not laced up properly," said the old woman. "Come here, I'll do it better." Snow-White stood before her, and she took hold of the laces and pulled them so tight that Snow-White could not breathe, and she fell down as if she were dead. Then the old woman was satisfied, and she went away.

Nightfall soon came, and the seven dwarfs returned home. They were horrified to find their dear Snow-White lying on the ground as if she were dead. They lifted her up and saw that she was laced up too tightly. They cut the bodice laces in two, and then she could breathe, and she came back to life. "It must have been the queen who tried to kill you," they said. "Take care and do not let anyone in again."

The queen asked her mirror:

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Who in this land is fairest of all?

The mirror answered once again:

You, my queen, are fair; it is true.
But Little Snow-White with the seven dwarfs
Is a thousand times fairer than you.

She was so horrified that the blood all ran to her heart, because she knew that Snow-White had come back to life. Then for an entire day and a night she planned how she might catch her. She made a poisoned comb, disguised herself differently, and went out again. She knocked on the door, but Snow-White called out, "I am not allowed to let anyone in."

Then she pulled out the comb, and when Snow-White saw how it glistened, and noted that the woman was a complete stranger, she opened the door, and bought the comb from her. "Come, let me comb your hair," said the peddler woman. She had barely stuck the comb into Snow-White's hair, before the girl fell down and was dead. "That will keep you lying there," said the queen. And she went home with a light heart.

The dwarfs came home just in time. They saw what had happened and pulled the poisoned comb from her hair. Snow-White opened her eyes and came back to life. She promised the dwarfs not to let anyone in again.

The queen stepped before her mirror:

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Who in this land is fairest of all?

The mirror answered:

You, my queen, are fair; it is true.
But Little Snow-White with the seven dwarfs
Is a thousand times fairer than you.

When the queen heard this, she shook and trembled with anger, "Snow-White will die, if it costs me my life!" Then she went into her most secret room -- no one else was allowed inside -- and she made a poisoned, poisoned apple. From the outside it was red and beautiful, and anyone who saw it would want it. Then she disguised herself as a peasant woman, went to the dwarfs' house and knocked on the door.

Snow-White peeped out and said, "I'm not allowed to let anyone in. The dwarfs have forbidden it most severely."

"If you don't want to, I can't force you," said the peasant woman. "I am selling these apples, and I will give you one to taste."

"No, I can't accept anything. The dwarfs don't want me to."

"If you are afraid, then I will cut the apple in two and eat half of it. Here, you eat the half with the beautiful red cheek!" Now the apple had been so artfully made that only the red half was poisoned. When Snow-White saw that the peasant woman was eating part of the apple, her desire for it grew stronger, so she finally let the woman hand her the other half through the window. She bit into it, but she barely had the bite in her mouth when she fell to the ground dead.

The queen was happy, went home, and asked her mirror:

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Who in this land is fairest of all?

And it answered:

You, my queen, are fairest of all.

"Now I'll have some peace," she said, "because once again I'm the most beautiful woman in the land. Snow-White will remain dead this time."

That evening the dwarfs returned home from the mines. Snow-White was lying on the floor, and she was dead. They loosened her laces and looked in her hair for something poisonous, but nothing helped. They could not bring her back to life. They laid her on a bier, and all seven sat next to her and cried and cried for three days. They were going to bury her, but they saw that she remained fresh. She did not look at all like a dead person, and she still had beautiful red cheeks. They had a glass coffin made for her, and laid her inside, so that she could be seen easily. They wrote her name and her ancestry on it in gold letters, and one of them always stayed at home and kept watch over her.

Snow-White lay there in the coffin a long, long time, and she did not decay. She was still as white as snow and as red as blood, and if she had been able to open her eyes, they still would have been as black as ebony wood. She lay there as if she were asleep.

One day a young prince came to the dwarfs' house and wanted shelter for the night. When he came into their parlor and saw Snow-White lying there in a glass coffin, illuminated so beautifully by seven little candles, he could not get enough of her beauty. He read the golden inscription and saw that she was the daughter of a king. He asked the dwarfs to sell him the coffin with the dead Snow-White, but they would not do this for any amount of gold. Then he asked them to give her to him, for he could not live without being able to see her, and he would keep her, and honor her as his most cherished thing on earth. Then the dwarfs took pity on him and gave him the coffin.

The prince had it carried to his castle, and had it placed in a room where he sat by it the whole day, never taking his eyes from it. Whenever he had to go out and was unable to see Snow-White, he became sad. And he could not eat a bite, unless the coffin was standing next to him. Now the servants who always had to carry the coffin to and fro became angry about this. One time one of them opened the coffin, lifted Snow-White upright, and said, "We are plagued the whole day long, just because of such a dead girl," and he hit her in the back with his hand. Then the terrible piece of apple that she had bitten off came out of her throat, and Snow-White came back to life.

She walked up to the prince, who was beside himself with joy to see his beloved Snow-White alive. They sat down together at the table and ate with joy.

Their wedding was set for the next day, and Snow-White's godless mother was invited as well. That morning she stepped before the mirror and said:

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Who in this land is fairest of all?

The mirror answered:
You, my queen, are fair; it is true.
But the young queen
Is a thousand times fairer than you.

She was horrified to hear this, and so overtaken with fear that she could not say anything. Still, her jealousy drove her to go to the wedding and see the young queen. When she arrived she saw that it was Snow-White. Then they put a pair of iron shoes into the fire until they glowed, and she had to put them on and dance in them. Her feet were terribly burned, and she could not stop until she had danced herself to death.

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- Source: *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, 1st ed. (Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung, 1812), v. 1, no. 53, pp. 238-50.
 - Translated by [D. L. Ashliman](#). © 1998-2002.
 - A note about the Grimms' name "Sneewittchen": Both elements of this compound word are in Low German, although the tale itself was recorded in High German. The High German form of the heroine's name would be Schneeweißchen. The Grimms used both forms in their first edition, titling the story "Sneewittchen (Schneeweißchen)."
 - Some differences between the edition of 1812 and later versions:
 1. Beginning with the edition of 1819, the Grimms add the statement that Snow-White's mother died during childbirth, and that her father remarried. Note that in the first edition, presumably the version closest to its oral sources, Snow-White's jealous antagonist is her own mother, not a stepmother.
 2. Beginning with the edition of 1819, the poisoned apple is dislodged when a servant accidentally stumbles while carrying the coffin to the prince's castle.
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Gold-Tree and Silver-Tree

Scotland

Once upon a time there was a king who had a wife, whose name was Silver-Tree, and a daughter, whose name was Gold-Tree. On a certain day of the days, Gold-Tree and Silver-Tree went to a glen, where there was a well, and in it there was a trout.

Said Silver-Tree, "Troutie, bonny little fellow, am not I the most beautiful queen in the world?"

"Oh! indeed you are not."

"Who then?"

"Why, Gold-Tree, your daughter."

Silver-Tree went home, blind with rage. She lay down on the bed, and vowed she would never be well until she could get the heart and the liver of Gold-Tree, her daughter, to eat.

At nightfall the king came home, and it was told him that Silver-Tree, his wife, was very ill. He went where she was, and asked her what was wrong with her.

"Oh! only a thing which you may heal if you like."

"Oh! indeed there is nothing at all which I could do for you that I would not do."

"If I get the heart and the liver of Gold-Tree, my daughter, to eat, I shall be well."

Now it happened about this time that the son of a great king had come from abroad to ask Gold-Tree for marrying. The king now agreed to this, and they went abroad.

The king then went and sent his lads to the hunting hill for a he goat, and he gave its heart and its liver to his wife to eat; and she rose well and healthy.

A year after this Silver-Tree went to the glen, where there was the well in which there was the trout.

"Troutie, bonny little fellow," said she, "am not I the most beautiful queen in the world?"

"Oh! indeed you are not."

"Who then?"

"Why, Gold-Tree, your daughter."

"Oh! well, it is long since she was living. It is a year since I ate her heart and liver."

"Oh! indeed she is not dead. She is married to a great prince abroad."

Silver-Tree went home, and begged the king to put the long-ship in order, and said, "I am going to see my dear Gold-Tree, for it is so long since I saw her." The long-ship was put in order, and they went away.

It was Silver-Tree herself that was at the helm, and she steered the ship so well that they were not long at all before they arrived.

The prince was out hunting on the hills. Gold-Tree knew the long-ship of her father coming.

"Oh!" said she to the servants, "my mother is coming, and she will kill me."

"She shall not kill you at all; we will lock you in a room where she cannot get near you."

This is how it was done; and when Silver-Tree came ashore, she began to cry out, "Come to meet your own mother, when she comes to see you."

Gold-Tree said that she could not, that she was locked in the room, and that she could not get out of it.

"Will you not put out," said Silver-Tree, "your little finger through the keyhole, so that your own mother may give a kiss to it?"

She put out her little finger, and Silver-Tree went and put a poisoned stab in it, and Gold-Tree fell dead.

When the prince came home, and found Gold-Tree dead, he was in great sorrow, and when he saw how beautiful she was, he did not bury her at all, but he locked her in a room where nobody would get near her.

In the course of time he married again, and the whole house was under the hand of this wife but one room, and he himself always kept the key of that room. On a certain day of the days he forgot to take the key with him, and the second wife got into the room. What did she see there but the most beautiful woman that she ever saw.

She began to turn and try to wake her, and she noticed the poisoned stab in her finger. She took the stab out, and Gold-Tree rose alive, as beautiful as she was ever.

At the fall of night the prince came home from the hunting hill, looking very downcast.

"What gift," said his wife, "would you give me that I could make you laugh?"

"Oh! indeed, nothing could make me laugh, except Gold-Tree were to come alive again."

"Well, you'll find her alive down there in the room."

When the prince saw Gold-Tree alive her made great rejoicings, and he began to kiss her, and kiss her, and kiss her. Said the second wife, "Since she is the first one you had it is better for you to stick to her, and I will go away."

"Oh! indeed you shall not go away, but I shall have both of you."

At the end of the year, Silver-Tree went to the glen, where there was the well, in which there was the trout.

"Troutie, bonny little fellow," said she, "am not I the most beautiful queen in the world?"

"Oh! indeed you are not."

"Who then?"

"Why Gold-Tree, your daughter."

"Oh! well, she is not alive. It is a year since I put the poisoned stab into her finger."

"Oh! indeed she is not dead at all, at all."

Silver-Tree went home, and begged the king to put the long-ship in order, for that she was going to see her dear Gold-Tree, as it was so long since she saw her. The long-ship was put in order, and they went away. It was Silver-Tree herself that was at the helm, and she steered the ship so well that they were not long at all before they arrived.

The prince was out hunting on the hills. Gold-Tree knew her father's ship coming.

"Oh!" said she, "my mother is coming, and she will kill me."

"Not at all," said the second wife; "we will go down to meet her."

Silver-Tree came ashore. "Come down, Gold tree, love," said she, "for your own mother has come to you with a precious drink."

"It is a custom in this country," said the second wife, "that the person who offers a drink takes a draught out of it first."

Silver-Tree put her mouth to it, and the second wife went and struck it so that some of it went down her throat, and she fell dead. they had only to carry her home a dead corpse and bury her.

The prince and his two wives were long alive after this, pleased and peaceful.

I left them there.

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- Source: Joseph Jacobs, [*Celtic Fairy Tales*](#) (London: David Nutt, 1892), [no. 11](#), pp. 88-92.

- Jacobs' source: Kenneth Macleod, [Celtic Magazine](#), vol. 13 (1888), [pp. 213-18](#).
 - Remarks by Joseph Jacobs: It is unlikely, I should say impossible, that this tale, with the incident of the dormant heroine, should have arisen independently in the Highlands; it is not likely an importation from abroad. Yet in it occurs a most "primitive" incident, the bigamous household of the hero.... On the "survival" method of investigation this would possibly be used as evidence for polygamy in the Highlands. Yet if, as is probably, the story came from abroad, this trait may have come with it, and only implies polygamy in the original home of the tale.
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The Young Slave

Italy, Giambattista Basile, *Il Pentamerone*

Lisa is born from a rose-leaf, and dieth through a fairy's curse; her mother layeth her in a chamber and biddeth her brother not to open the door. But his wife being very jealous, wishing to see what is shut therein, openeth the door, and findeth Lisa well and alive, and attiring her in slave raiments, treateth her with cruelty. Lisa being at last recognised by her uncle, he sendeth his wife home to her relations, and giveth his niece in marriage.

In days of yore, and in times long gone before, there lived a baron of Serva-Scura, and he had a young sister, a damsel of uncommon beauty, who often fared to the gardens in company of other young damsels of her age. One day of the days they went as usual, and beheld a rose-tree which had a beautiful fully opened rose upon it, and they agreed to wager that whosoever should jump clear above the tree without damaging the rose would win so much. Then the damsels began to jump one after the other, but none could clear the tree; till it coming to Cilia's turn (thus was the baron's sister hight), she took a little longer distance, and ran quickly, and jumped, and cleared the tree without touching the rose, and only a single leaf fell to the ground. She quickly picked it up, and swallowed it before any of the others perceived aught, and thus won the wager.

Three days had hardly passed, when she felt that she was with child, and finding that such was the case she nearly died with grief, well wotting that she had done naught to bring such a catastrophe upon her, and she could not suppose in any way how this had occurred. Therefore she ran to the house of some fairies, her friends, and relating to them her case, they told her that there was no doubt but that she was with child of the leaf she had swallowed.

Cilia hearing this hid her state as long as it was possible, but the time came at length for her delivery, and she gave birth secretly to a beauteous woman-child, her face like a moon in her fourteenth night, and she named her Lisa, and sent her to the fairies to be brought up. Now each of the fairies gave to the child a charm; but the last of them, wanting to run and see her, in so doing twisted the foot, and for the anguish of pain she felt cursed her, saying that when she should reach her seventh year, her mother in combing her hair would forget the comb sticking in the hair on her head, and this would cause her to die. And years went by till the time came, and the mishap took place, and the wretched mother was in despair at this great misfortune, and after weeping and wailing, ordered seven crystal chests one within the other, and had her child put within them, and then the chest was laid in a distant chamber in the palace; and she kept the key in her pocket.

But daily after this her health failed, her cark and care bringing her to the last step of her life; and when she felt her end drawing near, she sent for her brother, and said to him, "O my brother, I feel death slowly and surely come upon me, therefore I leave to thee all my belongings. Be thou the only lord and master; only must thou take a solemn oath that thou wilt never open the furthestest chamber in this palace, of which I consign to thee the key, which thou wilt keep within thy desk."

Her brother, who loved her dearly, gave her the required promise, and she bade him farewell and died.

After a year had passed the baron took to himself a wife, and being one day invited to a hunt by some of his friends, he gave the palace in charge to his wife, begging her not to open the forbidden chamber, whose key was in his desk. But no sooner had he left the palace than dire suspicion entered in her mind, and turned by jealousy, and fired by curiosity (the first dower of womankind), she took the key, and opened the door, and beheld the seven crystal chests, through which she could perceive a beauteous child, lying as it were in a deep sleep. And she had grown as any other child of her age would, and the chests had lengthened with her.

The jealous woman, sighting this charming creature, cried, "Bravo my priest; key in waistband, and ram within; this is the reason why I was so earnestly begged not to open this door, so that I should not behold Mohammed, whom he worshippeth within these chests."

Thus saying, she pulled her out by the hair of her head; and whilst so doing the comb which her mother had left on her head fell off, and she came again to life, and cried out, "O mother mine, O mother mine."

Answered the baroness, "I'll give thee mamma and papa;" and embittered as a slave, and an-angered as a bitch keeping watch on her young, and with poison full as an asp, she at once cut off the damsel's hair, and gave her a good drubbing, and arrayed her in rags. Every day she beat her on her head, and gave her black eyes, and scratched her face and made her mouth to bleed just as if she had eaten raw pigeons.

But when her husband came back and saw this child so badly treated, he asked the reason of such cruelty; and she answered that she was a slave-girl sent her by her aunt, so wicked and perverse that it was necessary to beat her so as to keep her in order.

After a time the baron had occasion to go to a country fair, and he, being a very noble and kind-hearted lord, asked of all his household people from the highest to the lowest not leaving out even the cats, what thing they would like him to bring for them, and one bade him buy one thing, and another another, till at the last he came to the young slave-girl.

But his wife did not act as a Christian should, and said, "Put this slave in the dozen, and let us do all things within the rule, as we all should like to make water in the same pot; leave her alone and let us not fill her with presumption."

But the lord, being by nature kind, would ask the young slave what she should like him to bring her, and she replied, "I should like to have a doll, a knife, and some pumice stone; and if thou shouldst forget it, mayst thou be unable to pass the river which will be in thy way."

And the baron fared forth, and bought all the gifts he had promised to bring, but he forgot that which his niece had bade him bring; and when the lord on his way home came to the river, the river threw up stones, and carried away the trees from the mountain to the shore, and thus cast the basis of fear, and uplifted the wall of wonderment, so that it was impossible for the lord to pass that way; and he at last remembered the curse of the young slave, and turning back, bought her the three things, and then returned home, and gave to each the gifts he had brought. And he gave to Lisa also what pertained to her.

As soon as she had her gifts in her possession, she retired in the kitchen, and putting the doll before her, she began to weep, and wail, and lament, telling that inanimate piece of wood the story of her travails, speaking as she would have done to a living being; and perceiving that the doll answered not, she took up the knife and sharpening it on the pumice stone, said, "If thou wilt not answer me, I shall kill myself, and thus will end the feast;" and the doll swelled up as a bagpipe, and at last answered, "Yes, I did hear thee, I am not deaf."

Now this went on for several days, till one day the baron, who had one of his portraits hung up near the kitchen, heard all this weeping and talking of the young slave-girl, and wanting to see to whom she spake, he put his eye to the keyhole, and beheld Lisa with the doll before her, to whom she related how her mother had jumped over the rose-tree, how she had swallowed the leaf, how herself had been born, how the fairies had each given her a

charm, how the youngest fairy had cursed her, how the comb had been left on her head by her mother, how she had been put within seven crystal chests and shut up in a distant chamber, how her mother had died, and how she had left the key to her brother. Then she spoke of his going a-hunting, and the wife's jealousy, how she disobeyed her husband's behest and entered within the chamber, and how she had cut her hair, and how she treated her like a slave and beat her cruelly, and she wept and lamented saying, "Answer me, O my doll; if not, I shall kill myself with this knife;" and sharpening it on the pumice stone, she was going to slay herself, when the baron kicked down the door, and snatched the knife out of her hands, and bade her relate to him the story.

When she had ended, he embraced her as his own niece, and led her out of his palace to the house of a relative, where he commanded that she should be well entreated so that she should become cheerful in mind and healthy of body, as owing to the ill treatment she had endured she had lost all strength and healthful hue. And Lisa, receiving kindly treatment, in a few months became as beautiful as a goddess, and her uncle sent for her to come to his palace, and gave a great banquet in her honour, and presented her to his guests as his niece, and bade Lisa relate to them the story of her past troubles.

Hearing the cruelty with which she had been entreated by his wife, all the guests wept. And he bade his wife return to her family, as for her jealousy and unseemly behaviour she was not worthy to be his mate; and after a time gave to his niece a handsome and worthy husband whom she loved; which touched the level that:

When a man least goods of any kind expecteth,
The heavens will pour upon him every grace.

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- Source: Giambattista Basile, [*Il Pentamerone; or, The Tale of Tales*](#), translated by Richard Burton, vol. 1 (London: Henry and Company, 1893), day 2, tale 8, [pp. 205-210](#).
 - This story combines elements of Snow White (type 709) and Sleeping Beauty (type 410) tales.
 - Giambattista Basile was born about 1575 in Naples and died 1632 in Giugliano, Campania. His *Lo cunto de li cunti* (The Story of Stories) was published in 1634, and named *Il pentamerone* by an editor because of its similarity to Boccaccio's *Decamerone*. The framework of *Lo cunto de li cunti* provides a context for ten women to tell one story each every day for five days. The fifty resulting stories, all based on oral tradition, comprise one of the monumental folktale collections of all time.
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Maria, the Wicked Stepmother, and the Seven Robbers

Italy

Once upon a time there was a man whose wife died, and he had only a little daughter, whose name was Maria.

Maria went to school to a woman who taught her sewing and knitting. In the evening when she left for home the woman would always say to her, "Give your father my kindest greetings."

Because of these friendly greetings the man thought, "She would be a wife for me," and he married the woman.

After they were married, the woman became very unfriendly toward poor Maria, for stepmothers have always been that way, and with time she could not stand her at all.

Then she said to her husband, "The girl eats too much of our bread. We will have to get rid of her."

But the man said, "I cannot kill my child!"

Then the woman said, "Tomorrow take her with you out into the country and leave her there alone, so that she will not be able to find her way back home."

The next day the man called his daughter and said to her, "We are going out into the country. We will take something to eat with us."

Then he got a large loaf of bread, and they set forth. However, Maria was clever, and she filled her pockets with bran. As she walked along behind her father, from time to time she threw down a little pile of bran onto the pathway. After walking for many hours they came to the top of a steep cliff. Her father dropped the loaf of bread over the cliff, then cried out, "Oh, Maria, our bread fell down there!"

"Father," said Maria, "I will climb down and get it."

So she climbed down the cliff and got the bread, but by the time she had climbed back up to the top, her father had gone away, and Maria was all alone.

She started to cry, for she was very far from home, and in a strange place. But then she thought about the bran and took courage. Following the bran, she finally arrived home again, late that night.

"Oh, father," she said, "why did you leave me alone?"

The man comforted her and talked to her until he had reassured her.

The stepmother was very angry that Maria had found the way back, and some time later she again told her husband that he should take Maria out into the country and abandon her in the woods.

The next morning the man called his daughter once again, and they set forth. The father again carried a loaf of bread, but Maria forgot to take the bran with her. In the woods they came to an even steeper and higher cliff. The father again dropped the bread over the edge, and Maria had to climb down to get it. When she arrived back at the top, her father had gone away, and she was alone. She began to cry bitterly, and she ran one way and the other for a long time, only to find herself even deeper in the dark woods.

Evening came, and suddenly she saw a light. She walked toward it and came to a little house. Inside she found a set table and seven beds, but no people were there.

The house belonged to seven robbers.

Maria hid behind a dough trough, and soon the seven robbers returned home. They ate and drank, and then went to bed. The next morning they left, but the youngest brother remained at home in order to cook the food and clean the house. After they had left, the youngest brother went out to buy food. Then Maria came out from behind the dough trough, swept and cleaned the house, and then put the kettle on the fire in order to cook the beans. Then once again she hid behind the dough trough.

When the youngest brother returned home he was amazed to see everything so clean, and when his brothers came back, he told them what had happened. They were all astonished and could not imagine how it had happened. The next day the second brother remained at home alone. He pretended that he too was going away, but he returned at once and saw Maria, who had come out once again to clean up the house.

Maria was frightened when she saw the robber. "Oh," she begged, "for heaven's sake, do not kill me!"

"Who are you?" asked the robber.

Then she told him about her wicked stepmother, and how her father had abandoned her in the woods, and how for two days she had been hiding behind the dough trough.

"You don't have to be afraid of us," said the robber. "Stay here with us and be our sister, and cook, sew, and wash for us."

When the other brothers returned home, they were satisfied with this, so Maria stayed with the seven robbers, did their housekeeping, and was always quiet and diligent.

One day as she was sitting by the window sewing, a poor old woman came by and asked for alms.

"Oh," said Maria, "I don't have much, for I myself am a poor, unhappy girl, but I will give you what I have."

"Why are you so unhappy?" asked the beggar woman.

Then Maria told her how she had left home and had come here. The poor woman went forth and told the wicked stepmother that Maria was still alive. When the stepmother heard this she was very angry, and she gave the beggar woman a ring that she was to take to poor Maria. The ring was a magic ring.

Eight days later the poor woman came again to Maria to beg for alms, and when Maria gave her something, she said, "Look, my child, I have here a beautiful ring. Because you have been so good to me, I want to give it to you."

Suspecting nothing, Maria took the ring, but when she put it on her finger she fell down dead.

When the robbers returned home and found Maria on the floor, they were very sad, and they cried bitterly for her. Then they made a beautiful coffin and laid Maria inside it, after having adorned her with the most beautiful jewelry. They also put a large amount of gold in the coffin, which they then set on an oxcart. They drove the oxcart into the city. When they came to the king's castle they saw that the stall door was wide open. They drove the oxen inside, in order to bring the cart into the stall. This caused the horses to become very uneasy, and they began rearing up and making noise.

Hearing the noise, the king sent someone down to ask the stall-master what had happened. The stall-master answered that a cart had been driven into the stall. No one was with the cart, but on it there was a beautiful coffin.

The king ordered that the coffin be brought to his room, and there he had it opened. When he saw the beautiful dead girl inside, he began to cry bitterly, and he could not leave her. He had four large wax candles brought and had them placed at the four corners of the coffin and lit. Then he sent everyone out of the room, barred the door, fell onto his knees before the coffin, and wept hot tears.

When it was time to eat, his mother sent for him, asking him to come. He did not answer at once, but instead wept all the more fervently. Then the old queen herself came and knocked on the door and asked him to open it, but he did not answer. She looked through the keyhole, and when she saw that her son was kneeling next to a corpse, she had the door broken down.

However, when she saw the beautiful girl, she herself was very moved, and she leaned over Maria and took her hand. Seeing the beautiful ring, she thought that it would be a shame to let it be buried along with the corpse, so she pulled it off. Then all at once the dead Maria came to life again.

The young king said joyfully to his mother, "This girl shall be my wife!"

The old queen answered, "Yes, so shall it be!" and she embraced Maria.

Thus Maria became the king's wife, and the queen. They lived joyfully and in splendor until they died.

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- Source: Laura Gonzenbach, "Maria, die böse Stiefmutter und die sieben Räuber," *Sicilianische Märchen, aus dem Volksmund gesammelt*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Verlag von Wilhelm Engelmann, 1870), [no. 2, pp. 4-7](#).

- Translated from the German by [D. L. Ashliman](#). © 2002.
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The Crystal Casket

Italy

There was once a widower who had a daughter. This daughter was between ten and twelve years old. Her father sent her to school, and as she was all alone in the world commended her always to her teacher. Now, the teacher, seeing that the child had no mother, fell in love with the father, and kept saying to the girl, "Ask your father if he would like me for a wife."

This she said to her every day, and at last the girl said, "Papa, the school-mistress is always asking me if you will marry her."

The father said, "Eh! my daughter, if I take another wife, you will have great troubles."

But the girl persisted, and finally the father was persuaded to go one evening to the school-mistress' house. When she saw him she was well pleased, and they settled the marriage in a few days. Poor child! How bitterly she had to repent having found a stepmother so ungrateful and cruel to her! She sent her every day out on a terrace to water a pot of basil, and it was so dangerous that if she fell she would go into a large river.

One day there came by a large eagle, and said to her, "What are you doing her?" She was weeping because she saw how great the danger was of falling into the stream. The eagle said to her, "Get on my back, and I will carry you away, and you will be happier than with your new mamma."

After a long journey they reached a great plain, where they found a beautiful palace all of crystal; the eagle knocked at the door and said, "Open, my ladies, open! for I have brought you a pretty girl." When the people in the palace opened the door, and saw that lovely girl, they were amazed, and kissed and caressed her. Meanwhile the door was closed, and they remained peaceful and contented.

Let us return to the eagle, who thought she was doing a spite to the stepmother. One day the eagle flew away to the terrace where the stepmother was watering the basil. "Where is your daughter?" asked the eagle.

"Eh!" she replied, "perhaps she fell from this terrace and went into the river; I have not heard from her in ten days."

The eagle answered, "What a fool you are! I carried her away; seeing that you treated her so harshly I carried her away to my fairies, and she is very well." Then the eagle flew away.

The stepmother, filled with rage and jealousy, called a witch from the city, and said to her, "You see my daughter is alive, and is in the house of some fairies of an eagle which often comes upon my terrace; now you must do me the favor to find some way to kill this stepdaughter of mine, for I am afraid that some day or other she will return, and my husband, discovering this matter, will certainly kill me."

The witch answered, "Oh, you need not be afraid of that; leave it to me."

What did the witch do? She had made a little basketful of sweetmeats, in which she put a charm; then she wrote a letter, pretending that it was her father, who, having learned where she was, wished to make her this present, and the letter pretended that her father was so glad to hear that she was with the fairies.

Let us leave the witch who is arranging all this deception, and return to Ermellina (for so the young girl was named). The fairies had said to her, "See, Ermellina, we are going away, and shall be absent four days; now in this time take good care not to open the door to anyone, for some treachery is being prepared for you by your stepmother."

She promised to open the door to no one: "Do not be anxious, I am well off, and my stepmother has nothing to do with me."

But it was not so. The fairies went away, and the next day when Ermellina was alone, she heard a knocking at the door, and said to herself, "Knock away! I don't open to anyone."

But meanwhile the blows redoubled, and curiosity forced her to look out of the window. What did she see? She saw one of the servant girls of her own home (for the witch had disguised herself as one of her father's servants). "O my dear Ermellina," she said, "your father is shedding tears of sorrow for you, because he really believed you were dead, but the eagle which carried you off came and told him the good news that you were here with the fairies. Meanwhile your father, not knowing what civility to show you, for he understands very well that you are in need of nothing, has thought to send you this little basket of sweetmeats."

Ermellina had not yet opened the door; the servant begged her to come down and take the basket and the letter, but she said, "No, I wish nothing!" but finally, since women, and especially young girls, are fond of sweetmeats, she descended and opened the door. When the witch had given her the basket, she said, "Eat this," and broke off for her a piece of the sweetmeats which she had poisoned. When Ermellina took the first mouthful the old woman disappeared. Ermellina had scarcely time to close the door, when she fell down on the stairs.

When the fairies returned they knocked at the door, but no one opened it for them; then they perceived that there had been some treachery, and began to weep. Then the chief of the fairies said, "We must break open the door," and so they did, and saw Ermellina dead on the stairs.

Her other friends who loved her so dearly begged the chief of the fairies to bring her to life, but she would not, "for," she said, "she has disobeyed me." But one and the other asked her until she consented; she opened Ermellina's mouth, took out a piece of the sweetmeat which she had not yet swallowed, raised her up, and Ermellina came to life again.

We can imagine what a pleasure it was for her fiends; but the chief of the fairies reproved her for her disobedience, and she promised not to do so again.

Once more the fairies were obliged to depart. Their chief said, "Remember, Ermellina: The first time I cured you, but the second I will have nothing to do with you."

Ermellina said they need not worry, that she would not open to anyone. But it was not so; for the eagle, thinking to increase her stepmother's anger, told her again that Ermellina was alive. The stepmother denied it all to the eagle, but she summoned anew the witch, and told her that her stepdaughter was still alive, saying, "Either you will really kill her, or I will be avenged on you."

The old woman, finding herself caught, told her to buy a very handsome dress, one of the handsomest she could find, and transformed herself into a tailoress belonging to the family, took the dress, departed, went to poor Ermellina, knocked at the door and said, "Open, open, for I am your tailoress."

Ermellina looked out of the window and saw her tailoress; and was, in truth, a little confused (indeed, anyone would have been so).

The tailoress said, "Come down, I must fit a dress on you."

She replied, "No, no; for I have been deceived once."

"But I am not the old woman," replied the tailoress, "you know me, for I have always made your dresses."

Poor Ermellina was persuaded, and descended the stairs; the tailoress took to flight while Ermellina was yet buttoning up the dress, and disappeared. Ermellina closed the door, and was mounting the stairs; but it was not permitted her to go up, for she fell down dead.

Let us return to the fairies, who came home and knocked at the door; but what good did it do to knock! There was no longer anyone there. They began to weep. The chief of the fairies said, "I told you that she would betray me again; but now I will have nothing more to do with her."

So they broke open the door, and saw the poor girl with the beautiful dress on; but she was dead. They all wept, because they really loved her. But there was nothing to do; the chief struck her enchanted wand, and commanded a beautiful rich casket all covered with diamonds and other precious stones to appear; then the others made a beautiful garland of flowers and gold, put it on the young girl, and then laid her in the casket, which was so rich and beautiful that it was marvelous to behold. Then the old fairy struck her wand as usual and commanded a handsome horse, the like of which not even the king possessed. Then they took the casket, put it on the horse's back, and led him into the public square of the city, and the chief of the fairies said, "Go, and do not stop until you find someone who says to you, 'Stop, for pity's sake, for I have lost my horse for you.'"

Now let us leave the afflicted fairies, and turn our attention to the horse, which ran away at full speed. Who happened to pass at that moment? The son of a king (the name of this king is not known); and saw this horse with that wonder on its back. Then the king began to spur his horse, and rode him so hard that he killed him, and had to leave him dead in the road; but the king kept running after the other horse. The poor king could endure it no longer; he saw himself lost, and exclaimed, "Stop, for pity's sake, for I have lost my horse for you!"

Then the horse stopped (for those were the words). When the king saw that beautiful girl dead in the casket, he thought no more about his own horse, but took the other to the city. The king's mother knew that her son had gone hunting; when she saw him returning with this loaded horse, she did not know what to think. The son had no father, wherefore he was all powerful. He reached the palace, had the horse unloaded, and the casket carried to his chamber; then he called his mother and said, "Mother, I went hunting, but I have found a wife."

"But what is it? A doll? A dead woman?"

"Mother," replied her son, "don't trouble yourself about what it is, it is my wife."

His mother began to laugh, and withdrew to her own room (what could she do, poor mother?).

Now this poor king no longer went hunting, took no diversion, did not even go to the table, but ate in his own room. By a fatality it happened that war was declared against him, and he was obliged to depart. He called his mother, and said, "Mother, I wish two careful chambermaids, whose business it shall be to guard this casket; for if on my return I find that anything has happened to my casket, I shall have the chambermaids killed."

His mother, who loved him, said, "Go, my son, fear nothing, for I myself will watch over your casket."

He wept several days at being obliged to abandon this treasure of his, but there was no help for it, he had to go. After his departure he did nothing but commend his wife (so he called her) to his mother in his letters.

Let us return to the mother, who no longer thought about the matter, not even to have the casket dusted; but all at once there came a letter which informed her that the king had been victorious, and should return to his palace in a few days. The mother called the chambermaids, and said to them, "Girls, we are ruined."

They replied, "Why, Highness?"

"Because my son will be back in a few days, and how have we taken care of the doll?"

They answered, "True, true; now let us go and wash the doll's face."

They went to the king's room and saw that the doll's face and hands were covered with dust and fly specks, so they took a sponge and washed her face, but some drops of water fell on her dress and spotted it. The poor chambermaids began to weep, and went to the queen for advice.

The queen said, "Do you know what to do! Call a tailoress, and have a dress precisely like this bought, and take off this one before my son comes."

They did so, and the chambermaids went to the room and began to unbutton the dress. The moment that they took off the first sleeve, Ermellina opened her eyes. The poor chambermaids sprang up in terror, but one of the most courageous said, "I am a woman, and so is this one; she will not eat me."

To cut the matter short, she took off the dress, and when it was removed Ermellina began to get out of the casket to walk about and see where she was. The chambermaids fell on their knees before her and begged her to tell them who she was. She, poor girl, told them the whole story. Then she said, "I wish to know where I am."

Then the chambermaids called the king's mother to explain it to her. The mother did not fail to tell her everything, and she, poor girl, did nothing but weep penitently, thinking of what the fairies had done for her.

The king was on the point of arriving, and his mother said to the doll, "Come her; put on one of my best dresses." In short, she arrayed her like a queen. Then came her son. They shut the doll up in a small room, so that she could not be seen. The king came with great joy, with trumpets blowing, and banners flying for the victory. But he took no interest in all this, and ran at once to his room to see the doll; the chambermaids fell on their knees before him saying that the doll smelled so badly that they could not stay in the palace, and were obliged to bury her.

The king would not listen to this excuse, but at once called two of the palace servants to erect the gallows. His mother comforted him in vain: "My son, it was a dead woman."

"No, no, I will not listen to any reasons; dead or alive, you should have left it for me."

Finally, when his mother saw that he was in earnest about the gallows, she rang a little bell, and there came forth no longer the doll, but a very beautiful girl, whose like was never seen. The king was amazed, and said, "What is this!"

Then his mother, the chambermaids, and Ermellina were obliged to tell him all that had happened.

He said, "Mother, since I adored her when dead, and called her my wife, now I mean her to be my wife in truth."

"Yes, my son," replied his mother, "do so, for I am willing."

They arranged the wedding, and in a few days were man and wife.

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- Source: Thomas Frederick Crane, *Italian Popular Tales* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1885), [no. 21](#), pp. 326-31.
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- [Grimm Brothers Home Page](#)
- [Sleeping Beauty](#). More tales about heroines caught up in a death-like sleep

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